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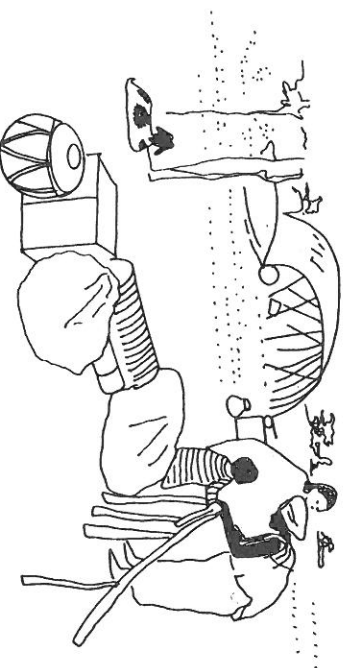
# The Position of Tubu Women in Pastoral Production:

Daza Keshherda, Republic of Niger

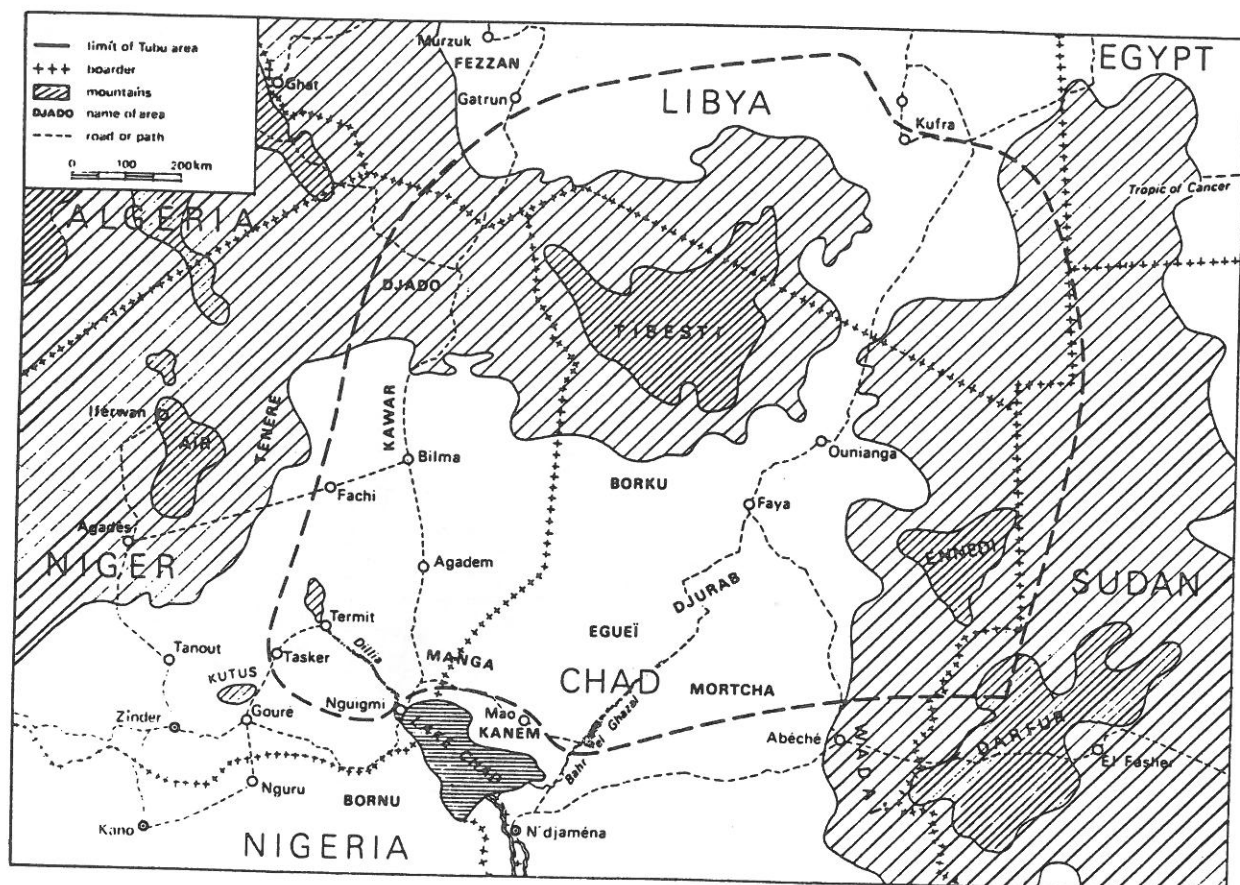
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*The Tubu live in Northern Chad, eastern Niger and southern Libya. They keep cattle and camels for milk and some goats for their meat. The author offers an account both of women's role in the practical division of tasks and her position in the structure of rights to livestock. She notes that Tubu women's limited stock rights tend overwhelmingly to derive from the relation they have to other people and concludes that these rights to livestock are fundamental for understanding the position of Tubu women in society.*



The Tubu, "black nomads of the Sahara" as Chapelle (1957) named them in his well-known book, are an important group of Saharo-Sahelian pastoralists. The area where they live is extensive, covering 1,300,000 km<sup>2</sup> (502,000 square miles). It is situated mainly in the northern part of Chad (north of the 14th parallel) but spreads also in eastern Niger and southern Libya (see map). No recent census enables us to know precisely the total population of the Tubu. The last census was taken in 1957 by Chapelle. According to him, the Tubu then numbered about 200,000. Since that date, the demographic growth may well have been significant, but the drought



and the political conflict in Chad have also taken their toll, so that nowadays the only sound estimate which can be made—however imprecise—is that the Tubu population numbers more than 200,000 but probably less than 600,000.

All the Tubu, like their neighbours to the east, north and west, are Muslims. They are divided into two main groups, the Teda in the north and the Daza in the south. Actually, the word *tubu* is not in fact used by these people themselves to designate their ethnic group as a whole. *Tubu* is a word of *kanuri* origin which means "the people (-*bu*) of Tibesti (*Tu*)"; Tibesti being the mountainous area in the north of Chad that is considered to be the special sphere of the Tubu. Despite such geographical associations however, the Tubu have spread far from these mountains. The main difference between the Teda and Daza is that they speak two different dialects, *teda-ga* and *daza-ga*, two forms of one language belonging to the so-called "east-Saharan" group. Tubu language is close to *kanuri*, spoken in Bornu (north-eastern Nigeria), and has nothing in common with *lamahéq*, which is spoken by the Twareg to the east of the Tubu, or with Arabic, even though some terms are borrowed from that latter language.

Apart from dialectal differences, there are several other traits that distinguish Teda and Daza from each other. They have distinct ways of life, although the differences in this respect are not quite as clear cut as those of language. The Teda, who live in the northern half of the Tubu area, are mainly camel-breeders. They also own a few gardens and some palm-groves in the oases and in Tibesti. The Daza, on the other hand, live further south in the Sahelian zone and are therefore mainly cattle-breeders, even though many individuals also raise camels, as well as a few goats or sheep. Teda and Daza intermarry frequently, so the two groups are deeply interwoven. The area of fieldwork for example, located in Niger, north-east of Gouré and south of Termit (see map), is considered to be the land of Daza Kasherda. The Daza Kasherda themselves, however, constitute only about 55 % of the total population; the rest being Teda (20 %) and a number of other Daza groups. Teda and Daza are divided into a large number of patrilineal clans which make up no geographical unit and have no common political leadership. Members of the same clan do however share the same camelbrands and the same sense of honour, which is of no little significance in this anarchic and feud-ridden society.

In the following pages, we shall concentrate on the position of women among the Daza Kasherda of Niger. It would appear that the situation of these particular women is rather similar to that found in other parts of Tubu land, but since no precise inquiry has been made on women's lives elsewhere in the Tubu world, this can only remain an assumption.

### Land, Climate and Subsistence

The area of fieldwork, called Ayer by the Tubu, spreads between the 14°30' parallel to the south, and the Termit mountains (16°20') to the north, which mark the southern boundary of the desert. Ayer is the part of Tubu area which lies furthest to south-west. In the east it is limited by a dry valley, the Dillia, and in the west by the Kutus mountains (see map). It is a small region extending little over 200 km (125 miles) from east to west, and about 130 km (80 miles) from north to south. Ayer is a land of fixed sand-dunes where grass is scanty and trees, most of them thorny, are few. Rainfall varies widely from one year to the other, but as a rule it is not enough for millet cultivation. Rainfall reaches 300 mm (12 inches) in the good years (like 1952), but it can fall to less than 100 mm (4 inches) in bad years (like 1973). Ayer, therefore, is a land of extensive cattle and camel breeding. Like most pastoralists in the Sahel, the Tubu breed these animals mainly for milk. Hence, most animals in the herds are females, and male stock are the first to be sold on the markets to pay taxes and to buy whatever is needed (millet, tea and sugar, clothes, etc.). Camel-breeding is favoured by the proximity of the desert, which during the cold season—from November to January—gives the camel herds the saline grazing they need for their health. The desert is where mating and the birth of young camels take place. Cattle herds, on the other hand, are never taken so far from the camps. Camps in general are not moved very much. They remain in the neighbourhood of the same well, unless there is no pasture or the well collapses. Some camps in the rainy season are moved close to natural ponds, which appear for one or two months at the bottom of clay basins. As long as the pond lasts, the strenuous task of watering cattle and camel can thus be avoided. Besides cattle and camel, the Tubu in Ayer also raise a few goats in order to have meat on important occasions. But goats are no real livestock in their eyes: it is contemptible to milk them and they are not valuable enough to be given as gifts for a wedding.

Let us now consider the position of Tubu women in pastoral production. The purpose of this paper is to show that the social status of Tubu women can best be understood from the position they have in the field of production. The concept of production used here concerns not only the kind of work that women do, but also, and primarily, the kind of rights they have to animals. I shall develop this point through the description of a woman's life-cycle.

### The Work of Men and Women

Tubu society, like so many others, is separated into two different universes: the masculine and the feminine. Those two worlds have different activities and relatively few contacts. The first years of life are at the margin of this partition, since boys and girls under the age of four or five are too young for the social rules to apply to them. Although women are of course the ones who take care of young children, everybody, man or woman, is kind and helpful of children. During these first years for example, the father's love for his baby girl is expressed freely, and one can see some fathers taking their daughters everywhere with them, even to meetings from which all women, including the oldest ones, are barred. This warm attitude is later gradually modified into one of distance, as the young girl grows up and gets more involved in the feminine world.

One of the first signs of the girl's social integration into the world of women is the small piece of material she wears as a slip from the age of three to four onwards. Boys remain totally naked for a much longer time, until they are eight or ten years old. A more significant sign of the young girl's socialization is the increased part she takes in feminine tasks, as soon as she is able to. When she is five or six years old, she starts helping her mother gather firewood from the bush. Her help with housework inside the tent and whilst watering the animals becomes increasingly valuable as she gets older and stronger. When she is fifteen, she can replace her mother in all work tasks, and mothers then let their daughters carry out the hardest chores, especially the watering of animals. In a similar way, the young boy gradually learns from his father everything he needs to know about masculine duties. A boy helps his father more and more as he grows up, and when he becomes a teenager he carries out most of the masculine tasks of animal breeding. The division of labour inside the nuclear family is thus based both on sex and age. Sex is the most decisive of the two since every child learns from its parent of the same sex the kind of work he or she will have to do.

The sexual division of labour among these pastoralists corresponds to what Murdock noticed in a large number of human societies (see Murdock, 1949, chap. 8), namely that feminine tasks are generally performed in the neighbourhood of the family's home, whereas masculine work often leads the man away from this neighbourhood.

The woman takes care of young children, as well as of the family's tent, which belongs to her. She keeps the tent clean and tidy, makes sure it is supplied with firewood and water, and prepares the meals. She also takes care of all young animals which are kept in camp before they are weaned, she milks the cattle and churns the milk. She may also milk the camels, but



this can be done by a man as well. Both cattle and camel milk are used for home consumption. Watering the herds also can be performed both by men and women. However, men more often water the camels and women the cattle. This is probably because camels by nature go further away from the camp (and therefore belong more to the man's realm) than cattle, which need daily watering at the camp well.

Masculine tasks include looking after the herds of both cattle and camels, searching for stray animals and eventually pursuing thieves. When they graze, cattle stay together and never go far from the camp, whereas camels scatter and cover much longer distances. Looking after camels is therefore more strenuous. It often requires long days of walk in the bush, as well as a good knowledge of the country, and the ability to know and follow every animal from its footprints on the sand. This is an art one only knows well after long years of learning. The work of a man also includes leading the camel herd on the desert pastures in the north during winter. A boy will accompany his father when he reaches ten years of age. Later on, when the lad is fifteen or so, his father lets him go north and take care of the camels alone. A man must also supply his home with food and especially with millet, which is, together with milk, the Tubu's basic food. For millet a man has to travel to the market. All markets attended by the Tubu of this area are located in the south, in the sedentary zone. The Nguru market in northern Nigeria is the most favoured one because of its size, the lower prices of commodities found there, and because of the better bargain that the Tubu can get for their animals there. Millet is bought on the market or from cultivators themselves with the money from the sale of animals. On the market, the Tubu also buy large quantities of tea and sugar, and occasionally they will purchase clothes, enameled bowls, or other household utensils. The distances are such (around 250 km) that going to the market and coming back always takes more than a month. The Tubu therefore only go to the market a few times a year. They wait until they have several animals to sell, and important purchases to make, such as for a wedding. Looking after the herds and going to the market are not the only reasons why a man must go far away from his home. Family reasons also make him pay frequent visits to his kinsmen and his in-laws in neighbouring camps. Women travel as well, but they can only leave their tent when they have somebody else to milk the animals and take care of the children, such as an older daughter, or a willing neighbour or kinswoman. When she can thus be freed, a woman may go to the market. More often she goes to pay visits to her kinsfolk. But she never goes as far or as often as her husband. So the division of labour, which allows a man to leave his tent quite often, obliges the woman to stay there.

### Not Yet a Woman

I have already said that, although the division of labour is mainly based on gender, it is also based on age. The children of the family, as soon as they become able to, perform the most strenuous tasks, unless the family has a male or female slave. In this case he or she is the one who has to work the hardest. This situation is however exceptional nowadays, since at the time of fieldwork (1972) the remaining slaves only represented 6% of the adult population. Nevertheless, in Tubu thinking there is always a direct relationship between a person's status and the amount (and irksomeness) of the work he or she must do. The inferior status of a young unmarried girl can accordingly be deduced from the fact that her mother gives her the hardest work to do, such as watering the cattle at the well or bringing water back to the tent. The low status of the unmarried girl can also be noticed from a number of other facts, such as the lack of expensive garments and adornments. Unlike adults and young men, she usually goes barefoot, and her clothes are frequently old and worn out. The pieces of jewellery she wears have little value. They usually consist only of a necklace of glass or plastic beads, a few black horn bracelets, a silver ring which hangs from a small hole in the right nostril, and a small silver pendant of long triangular shape which is tied to the upper part of the neck with a bit of black wool. Married women carry more valuable pieces of jewellery. These consist of three different kinds of silver ornaments: pairs of thick bracelets, high engraved ankle-bracelets, and necklaces made out of Maria-Theresa coins. Only a few Tubu women possess all of these articles of jewellery.

The difference between a young unmarried girl and a married woman can also be seen from their *hardos*. Both are made of two kinds of plaits. The first kind is the same for teenage girls and married women, namely thin plaits which run down the skull on each side of the head. The second kind, much thicker, go from the forehead to the nape of the neck. Teenage girls have three plaits of this kind, whereas married women have only two. Both teenagers and women shave their forehead, from the temples upright, giving height to their faces. Before they reach their teens, girls have the same *hardo* as boys: a shaven skull, except for a crest or tuft of hair on top.

A young Tubu girl works hard, yet takes no real part in social life. In fact, she is virtually non-existent socially. She may of course enjoy herself once in a while by going to dances, but she is never considered a true individual in the sense of being allowed to influence any important decisions, such as the choice of her own husband. Nobody ever asks her advice, and one simply expects her to do what she is told. Greetings between adults and young men are an important show of courtesy among the Tubu, especially with stran-

ers, but unmarried girls are never greeted by strangers; they are simply ignored. In the same way, girls are never allowed to drink tea, a very important element of social life among the Tubu, as it is for many other Saharo-Sahelian pastoralists. Tea is almost a luxury in their difficult life, and is valued enormously. It is when they drink tea that the Tubu spend the best time of their day; they relax, exchange news and discuss matters. Adults and young unmarried men drink tea as often as they can; unmarried girls don't drink it at all.

Another sign of the girl's low status is that she owns very little livestock. Like her brother, she may own one or two cattle or camels, which she may have received when she was born or weaned, from her father, her mother or any other kinsman or woman. Such animals, as well as their offspring, are then considered hers, but they go into her father's herd and the father may do what he wants with them. He may even sell them if he feels it to be fit for family interest. He does not have to justify or explain his deed to his wife, or to the child that owns the animal(s). Such is the case for all animals owned by children, whether they are boys or girls, until they are married. So a boy's or a girl's property has the same status, which is more symbolic than anything else. Nevertheless, a boy usually has a larger number of animals than his sister. Young Tubu boys in Ayer are circumcised round the age of thirteen, while girls have no corresponding rite de passage. On this occasion, the boys are given a few head of cattle or camel by various patrilineal kin, the number varying from three to four animals to as many as ten or twelve. The rights the boys have over this livestock are the same as those over animals given at birth or weaning. However symbolic this property may be, it becomes more significant once the boy is married, for young men take from their father's herds the cattle and camels that they own in order to start a new independent life. Thanks to the animals they get at circumcision, when boys marry they own far more animals than girls do. Also, married women often do not bother to reclaim their livestock from their father's herds.

A last point can be added. Young Tubu girls, unlike young men, are not expected to and most often do not, have sexual intercourse before they are married. Boys enjoy sexual freedom as soon as they are circumcised. They may have intercourse either with a married woman (without her husband's knowledge) or, more often, with a young divorced woman, since sexual freedom among divorcees is an admitted fact. But they almost never have such a relationship with a young unmarried girl. It would bring shame to the girl and her family, and might induce her husband to repudiate her during the wedding ceremony.

### Becoming an Adult

Marriage for Tubu girls usually takes place between the ages of fifteen and twenty. They may be married earlier, sometimes as early as eight or ten years old, but in these cases marriage is only consummated when the girl reaches puberty. The first husband is chosen by the girl's family, with the agreement of the whole kin but without consulting the girl herself. Marriage brings enormous changes in the girl's life. She acquires a whole set of new rights and her status improves a great deal. First her appearance changes: her *hardo* is modified and she is given new clothes for the wedding ceremony. She also receives valuable pieces of the jewellery described above. From now on she will own her own tent, i.e. the mats and the wooden frame provided by her in-laws, plus the bed and all cooking utensils. All this will remain hers even if she is later repudiated. Having a tent is so well linked with the state of marriage in the Tubu's mind that "to put up one's tent" means "to get married" in *daza-ga*. The young wife henceforth takes part in social life, and she drinks tea along with other adults and young men. She has more responsibilities, since she must now take care of her own home, and eventually, her own children. With her husband, the young wife is at the head of a new and economically independent nuclear family, which lives from its own herd.

These very important changes which marriage brings to the girl's condition do not of course take place immediately. Changes are made during a transition period of about two years, during which the young couple lives in the same camp as the wife's parents. During that time, called *yollumi*, the wife's husband is supposed to work for his father-in-law, but he is in fact away quite often, travelling for various reasons. Before the end of these two years the young bride often gives birth to her first child. When *yollumi* is over—and this is decided by the wife's father—the couple may leave her parent's camp and the husband chooses the new residence. He usually decides on a camp where some of his own relatives live, so the wife by that time has to leave her parent's camp in order to follow her husband.

Even though the married woman's social status is by far superior to the girl's, her role in managing the family economy is rather limited. The initiative she may take in this field depends mainly on the kind of rights she has in the family's herd, as opposed to her husband's rights over the same animals. These rights stem from the way the animals were obtained. Since most rights over animals are obtained through marriage, it is now necessary, in order to give a clear picture of these rights and of the woman's status and position in the economy, to describe the Tubu system of marriage. The nature of this system throws light on husband/wife relations and

on the relations that both individuals have with their kin and in-laws. Among the Tubu, marriage is made up of two main and complementary elements, namely the rules of marriage on the one hand, and the system of livestock transfers which goes with it on the other hand.

The Tubu of Ayer say that marriage is forbidden when "there are three grand-fathers", which means when the couple has one mutual great-grandparent. This corresponds to the 8th degree of kinship in the civil way of computation. Actually, in 1972, this rule was not as strictly followed as in earlier times. One marriage in four did not abide by the rule, spouses in these cases being related to the 7th or 8th degree. This marriage prohibition applies regardless of the sex of the kin through whom kinship can be counted. Kinship through women in this respect is thus just as important as kinship through men, and a common feminine ancestor will prohibit marriage as well. It is thus *the cognatic kindred as a whole*, up to the 8th degree, which forms an area of exogamy. The immediate consequence of this rule of marriage is that for each new marriage one has to find a mate far away from the family circle. This rule of marriage thus contributes greatly to the geographical dispersion and intermingling of clans which can be seen in Ayer as well as in Tibesti or other parts of the Tubu world. As a second consequence, it sets up a basic split between kin and in-laws, which is reflected in the Tubu kinship terminology (see Baroin, 1985).

For a first marriage, all members of the kindred have a say in choosing the spouse. But only those who are geographically close actually take an interest in the event. The choice cannot be made if one of the kin members disagrees. This is not a mere formality, because these relatives must later take part in the system of livestock transfers which accompanies marriage. Each new marriage therefore is not a personal deal between two individuals, but is instead an alliance between two different kindreds, the husband's and the wife's. We shall now see how this alliance is substantiated by livestock transfers.

### The Marriage Transactions

Bridewealth is important among the Tubu of Ayer. It is expressed in terms of pieces of cloth which formerly were the preferred way of payment. At the time of my fieldwork, payment in cloth had long since been abandoned, and had been replaced by payment either in tea and sugar, or in livestock (cattle or camel). The choice of payment is made by the girl's father. The average bridewealth required for a first marriage amounts to ten adult female camels, or to a quantity of tea and sugar considered equivalent to 200 or 300 pieces of cloth. To buy this tea and sugar one has to sell on the market up to

twenty or thirty cattle and camels of various ages. As a rule, a young unmarried man, who depends economically on his father, does not have these animals. He has to ask his father for some, and visits kinsmen on both his father's and his mother's side in order to get the balance. Each one of them gives him an animal. This period of gradually raising necessary stock may take two years or more. As the young man gets access to more cattle and camels, he pays bridewealth to his father-in-law in the way the latter wishes. He may give him ten adult female camels, or go to the market to sell the animals he has been given in order to buy tea and sugar. In this first stage of matrimonial livestock transfers, the young man takes the most active part, but all kinsmen contribute to bridewealth and it is only through his kindred's help that a young man may marry.

Livestock transfers do not stop there. The young man's father-in-law keeps only a minor part of the bridewealth he has received for himself. He distributes the rest of it to his daughter's paternal and maternal kin, so that all members of the girl's kindred have a share in her bridewealth. This second stage of animal transfers is followed by a third one, directed from the kin of the bride to the new household.

The date of the wedding is decided upon by the bride's father, and the ceremony takes place in his camp. On the second day of the ceremony, all the girl's kinsmen and women who have received a share in her bridewealth give an animal (cattle or camel) to the bridegroom. Each gift must have approximately the same value as the one received. The animals thus given, which are called *confora*, are shown to the assembly, which dutifully applauds each donor's generosity. These animals make up a small herd, the size of which depends on the amount of bridewealth given at the beginning. For a first marriage this herd may amount to twenty or thirty cattle and camels of various ages. This herd, given by the bride's kin, supplies the young couple with the basis of its economical autonomy.

The cycle of livestock transfers does not however stop here. Several years after the wedding, when a child is born or for some other reason (which may not be obvious), the wife's parents often give further animals to their son-in-law. As the years pass by, the husband may receive as many as ten or more cattle or camels from his affines, depending on the latter's wealth and on the good relations he has established with them and with his wife. This livestock is called *confora* as well. It belongs to the husband, but he is meant to manage it for the benefit of his wife and children.

The wife often takes direct steps in order to get her kinsmen to give her husband even more animals. She goes on camelback to make a round of visits to her kinsfolk, with or without her husband. She takes with her a number of small presents for her kin, such as tea and sugar, and a few



cooking utensils. She often brings along her last born child, leaving home for one month or more, travelling from camp to camp and visiting her relatives. All women do not take the trouble to go on such a trip, but most of them do it at least once in their life. Visiting relatives in this manner implies that the wife considers her relationship with her husband satisfactory. The wife may receive ten or more camels or cattle during the course of her journey. These animals have the same juridical status in the family herd as the *conoŋora* stock given by the wife's kin during the wedding ceremony.

If one sums up the various gifts made from the day the girl is asked for until many years after marriage, one may conclude there is no unidirectional flow of bridewealth in this system. The bridewealth given initially is compensated on the wedding day by gifts of equal or greater value (if one takes into account the gifts made later by the wife's kin to her husband). In this system of livestock exchange both the husband's and the wife's kindreds are equally involved. They have complementary and opposed roles. It is thus logical that these two kindreds are not the same, something which is guaranteed by the rule prohibiting marriage with close kinsmen. Formally, this system results in the fact that the husband owes his in-laws a good share of his wealth. This is, as we shall see, of some importance for affinal relations.

### The Composition of a Conjugal Herd

The family herd is not however solely made up of the animals given by the wife's kin. It also includes the personal dower (*sadaŋ*) which is given the wife, as the Muslim rule requires, by her husband on the wedding ceremony. Among the Tubu of Ayer, the dower usually consists of one or two heads of female stock (cattle or camel) and the offspring of these animals. The wife's dower constitutes a numerically much less important part of the herd than the livestock given by the wife's kindred. The family herd also includes animals which are the husband's personal property. These are animals he received from his own kin under various circumstances, e.g. when he was a child or at circumcision, and which his father kept until his marriage. The husband's personal property also includes animals he bought with money earned while working abroad. Many men in Ayer went to work for one or two years in Libya, either before or during marriage, in order to bring back money to build up their herds. The family livestock also includes animals given to the family's children by various kin, and sometimes also animals which are, besides the dower, the wife's personal property. These are animals she received as gifts or as inheritance from her kin. Very often however, a woman will not bring such stock into her husband's herd, but

entrusts them instead to other kinsmen (for reasons to which we shall shortly return). The family herd quite often also includes animals lent to the couple by some of the husband's or wife's kinsmen. Conversely, since both the husband and the wife may lend some of their cattle or camels to other people, animals owned by them are not all to be found in the family herd.

The livestock that the family subsists on has various origins, and the rights to any particular animal (and its offspring) depend on the way that animal was obtained. As we have seen, the father, who is head of the family, may do what he wishes with those animals belonging to himself and his children. However he cannot sell his wife's personal livestock (i.e. the dower and the animals she got from her own kin) without her consent. If he tries to do so, she can ask him to pay her back. Conversely, the wife herself usually does not dispose of her personal livestock against the wishes of her husband. The animals given to the husband by the wife's kin have yet another status. They belong to the husband but are explicitly intended for use in the interest of his wife and their children. The husband may sell an animal once in a while in order to meet the family needs, for instance to buy millet and clothes, but he may not give one of these animals to a child by another wife, or sell such livestock to pay bridewealth for a second marriage. Polygyny is not important in Ayer. Only a minority of rich men have two wives and very few have three. Polygyny is always resented by the first wife and by her parents, who will often try to break their daughter's marriage. When a man has several wives, he allocates each of them some of his personal livestock, but he cannot distribute animals given by one wife's kin. These animals (*conoŋora*) always remain with the wife in whose name they were given. She is the one who takes care of them and who gets the milk for home consumption. The rights a man has on this type of animal are thus in theory limited. In practice, however, these restrictions are often difficult to enforce. The wife, who is not aware of her husband's business, is in no position to control his doings. Only in case of constant misuse can she call upon her kinsmen to help her. The problem here is that viri-local residence patterns usually ensure that a woman's kinsmen will live far away from her. Thus, the husband has quite a free hand in managing his wife's animals. If he repudiates his wife, the animals remain his even if his wife has given him no child. In a couple's herd, the proportion of livestock given by the wife's kin varies but is frequently large. Its mere existence cannot but have an influence on husband-wife relationships, as well as on the relations between a man and his in-laws. Indeed, a good part of a couple's wealth comes from the wife's kindred, and the potential of more gifts gives the wife's kin a strong influence on the couple's life. This is strengthened by the fact that when there is a problem between husband and wife, the only people the wife can expect support from are her kinsmen.



### Marital Tensions

There can be many reasons for marital disagreement. Conflicts may first be caused by the fact that the husband and wife did not choose one another as marriage partners. It would not be proper for a girl to hint that she does not like the man her kin want to marry her to. On the other hand, as soon as she is married she may show her dislike for him quite openly. This occurs fairly frequently. In such cases, the young wife keeps away from her tent systematically every night. Her parents may beat her until she behaves otherwise, but if she persists, and if her dislike for her husband is really strong, the marriage will be broken: sooner or later the husband gets weary of his wife's behaviour and repudiates her. Other frequent reasons for disagreement between husband and wife are the man's wish to take a second wife, his misuse of his wife's personal livestock or of the livestock given by his wife's kin, or his failing to face a husband's duties. These are, basically, to provide food and clothes for his wife and children.

When a wife is dissatisfied with her husband, she can try to get what she wants by quarrelling with him. If this is not enough, her only effective means of influence is to run away, usually back to her parent's camp. If the husband does not do anything, the woman may live for several years with her natal family. Sooner or later her kin will try to convince her husband to repudiate her, so that she can be married to another man. If the husband, on the contrary, tries to get his wife back, he must negotiate the matter over with her kinsmen. If they think well of the husband, they may bring the woman back to him at their own initiative. More commonly however, they will demand a sizeable gift from him before they give her back. The size of such compensation depends on the situation, but it frequently amounts to one or two she-camels. When the gift is made the wife returns to her husband's camp, but if the ground for dispute is not thoroughly settled between the spouses, she will run away again, starting the same process anew. When disagreement is deep, the wife's kin may refuse to let her return to her husband. He can ask his own kinsmen to intercede with his in-laws on his behalf, or try to win one of his wife's kin over to his cause, usually with a gift, hoping that the affine will then act as a spokesman and mediator. Both strategies will force the husband to pay many visits and gifts. If these steps are not met with success, the husband's only alternative will be to give up and repudiate his wife.

It is clear, then, that a wife by herself has no strong means of influence over her husband. Her main strength comes from the fact that she can always call upon her own kinsmen in case of difficulty. In situations of conjugal tension a husband does not deal with his wife so much as with his

wife's kinfolk. Indeed, uxorilateral kinsmen play a considerable role in the couple's life, because of the influence they have on the young wife and because of their power on her husband. It is therefore very important for a man to remain on good terms with his wife's kin, both from an economic point of view and for the sake of a continued and happy married life. As for a woman, the more kinsmen she has and the richer and more powerful they are, the stronger she may feel when confronting her husband.

The first marriage quite often does not last. Although polygyny is not so common, successive marriages are frequent, and a Tubu's married life often only settles with the second or third spouse, if not more. Repudiation is the only way to put an end to marriage. It takes place when the husband says "I let go" (*sov*). Exceptionally however, if the husband disappears for several years without giving any news of himself, and if he notoriously fails to fulfill his spousal duties, the wife's kin, after trying to get in touch with him and to warn him, may consider the marriage as broken. Such situations do arise once in a while.

A divorced woman lives in her own tent in her parent's camp. She depends economically on her kin. Usually she marries again after a short time, two years at most. A divorcee enjoys total sexual freedom, and thus she usually knows her new husband before they marry. If she is still young (under twenty-five years old) her kin have a say in choosing her new spouse, but she can veto their choice and announce her preferences. Although a young divorcee is usually strongly influenced by her kin's advice, she is free to choose the husband she wants. For her second marriage, the cycle of livestock transfers described above takes place again. For an older woman however, both bridewealth and dowry are less important or even absent. When a woman is over thirty years old, the bridegroom's only expenses are the personal dowry plus a small gift of tea and sugar to the wife's parents. Sometimes the previous husband asks for a gift. He is entitled to decide to put a number of animals "on his wife's head" when repudiating her. A subsequent suitor will have to pay the ex-husband this number of livestock before marrying her. When the new husband pays these animals, he does not have to pay any bridewealth to the woman's kin. This peculiar custom may be considered to be a right the former husband has on his ex-wife's new marriage. The animals asked for (called *jeda*) are never many. In Ayer during the time of fieldwork, such animals never exceeded one or two heads of cattle. If the husband had asked for more, the woman's kin would persuade him to lower his price. Many men did not ask for anything at all.

When a man repudiates his wife, he keeps the children with him. It is however not proper to repudiate a wife who has borne many children (three or four for example). Children thus contribute to the stability of marriage.

When a man dies, his children preferably stay with their father's kin, and the levirate is commonly practiced. The Tubu consider this to be the best economic solution for the orphans, since the livestock the father owned becomes his children's, even if they are too young to manage the herd themselves. If the widow marries one of her husband's close kin, that man is considered likely to take good care of the children's animals and interests. If the widow chooses to marry a stranger, one always fears that her new husband will squander the children's livestock. For her children's sake, therefore, the widow most often accepts the levirate, which also enables her to stay with them.

### Female Careers and Resources

We can now draw a few conclusions. When she is young, the Tubu woman in Ayer finds her main support from her kindred. When she gets older however, her relationships with her kinsmen may have become more remote because of geographical distances, and the security that she may enjoy by then among her in-laws comes from the children she has borne. The more children she has, the more secure she may feel, since they are her best guarantee against repudiation. Even if her husband dies, she and her children will stay in his family. When the woman gets old, it is again her children who will give her the support she needs, because she will be economically dependent on them. The situation is the same for an old man, who also depends on his children for his living. One understands therefore why having many children is so desirable for the Tubu.

When a woman remains childless, her marital career is usually more eventful. Barrenness is not a public reason for divorce, but it is quite often a hidden one. A barren woman never has such a strong position in her husband's family as the mother of several children. Nevertheless, whatever her age she is always sure to get support from anyone in her own kindred. When the father is old or dead, brothers are the first relatives she can go to. Marital life among the Tubu is often hazardous, but kinship solidarity is something one can always rely on. For this reason, a wife often prefers to entrust her father, uncle or brother with the livestock she owns, rather than bringing it into her husband's herd. Kinship solidarity is also important when accounting for why a daughter often refrains from claiming her share of her father's inheritance—the share she is entitled to under Muslim law. Even if a woman does claim her inheritance, she will often leave it with her brother. In actual fact, it is not necessary for a Tubu woman to possess livestock personally since, whatever her marital situation, she always remains economically dependent upon a man.

Thus the attitude of women, as regards livestock property, is quite different from that of men. Personal ownership of livestock is very important in a man's eyes, but for a married woman what counts is not so much the livestock she owns personally as the livestock which are allocated to her from her husband's herd. Indeed, a woman often has little control over the former animals since they are usually placed with kin from a different camp. The livestock allocated to her in her husband's herd are the ones she takes care of and gets milk from for her household. Her right to the milk production of her husband's livestock is however not the same for all animals, but depends on the category the animal belongs to. Only a part of the husband's herd is permanently allocated to her. This includes her dower and the animals given to her husband by her kin. No other wife may take care of these animals or benefit from their milk production. Only exceptionally may another wife be lent a milking cow from her co-wife's herd if she does not have enough milk to feed her children. The cow is then given back as soon as possible. Other animals permanently in a wife's milk herd are the ones belonging to her children, and those that she personally owns, such as those which she brought into her husband's herd. When she is the only wife, the woman also takes care of all the animals her husband personally owns, i.e. those which he has received as gifts from his kin, inherited, or bought with money he earned. Although she milks these animals, she never considers them to be hers. Her husband may take this livestock away from her at any time to give it to another wife or to some kin of his.

As a general rule, true ownership of livestock, i.e. the total freedom of doing what one wants with it, is mostly enjoyed by men. Women most often do not dispose of their personal livestock as freely as men do. Moreover, they usually possess much fewer animals. Even for men however, true ownership is restricted to a limited number of animals in the herd. Actually, a man only enjoys limited rights over most animals, even if these rights are indeed greater than a woman's. Women's rights on most livestock, on the other hand, are qualitatively different from those of men. As wives, they have indefeasible rights in the milk production of most animals owned by their husbands. This of course is the most common pattern. But there are exceptions, for a woman may possess many animals, sometimes more than her husband. Such exceptional female wealth may arise for several reasons. It may be the result of a situation where the woman's father was very rich when he died, so that although the daughter only had a small share of inheritance, it was nonetheless quite large. Also, when a woman has no brother, she is the single heir to her parent's wealth and thus may also become richer than most women are. And as always is the case with cattle and camel breeding in this kind of marginal land, luck may play an

important part. Let us say for example that a woman received no important gift or inheritance from her kin. But the only cow or she-camel which she was given at birth, or which her husband gave her as dowry, happened to be particularly fertile. If the increase is not lost through disease, theft or sale, a single animal may result in a whole herd after ten or twenty years. Uneven animal increase may swell some individual's wealth more than other's, and this of course applies regardless of sex.

When a woman for one of these reasons is richer than her husband, a number of changes are apparent in husband and wife relationships. Frequently, such a couple's residence is uxoriocal instead of virilocal. The wife has greater authority at home than usual, even though her husband formally remains head of the family and she is supposed to obey him.

When a poor man is married to a rich woman (a situation which does actually occur in a few cases), he depends heavily on her. She gives him animals from her personal herd to sell in order to meet family needs, or she may allow him to take some for his personal herd so that he can increase his own wealth. When marital relations are to the wife's satisfaction, such gifts are not unusual. A man, in contrast, never gives any animal to his wife as an outright gift, unless he has wronged her and wants to bring about a reconciliation by giving her an animal.

On the whole, however, one can conclude that a woman's juridical position in pastoral production is weaker than that of her husband, since her rights on the family herd are much more restricted than his. Yet her contribution to the family economy, as regards the work she does, may be considered as important as her husband's, even though men and women perform quite different tasks. Socially as well as economically, the woman is less independent than the man. Almost all her rights derive from her relation to somebody else, i.e. as a daughter or kinswoman, as a wife and as a mother. Of course this also applies to a man, since many of his rights come from his being a husband, a father and a kinsman. But the rights attached to these social positions give him more autonomy than the woman enjoys, and his personal herd, to which he has unrestricted rights, is more frequently of a size that can grant him independence.

### The Influence of Islam

This article has been based on observations made in Ayer in 1972, but the situation depicted here appears to be representative for conditions that have probably remained the same for a long time. The only serious reasons for change I could then notice was Islamisation, which has become stronger in recent times. But if the Tubu in Ayer consider themselves to be Muslims,

and if they know and follow the Islamic rules on the whole, this in no way implies that they have turned to Arabic culture. The position of women among the Tubu is quite different from that of the Arabs in general. As regards livestock property, Islam brought two customs into the Tubu culture which these people probably did not have in pre-Islamic times. These customs are a) giving a share of the inheritance to the daughters (in principle, half the share that their brothers get), and b) giving a dowry to the bride at weddings. But we saw that the size of this dowry is limited (one or two cattle or camels) and that women, logically enough in the Tubu social system, often give up their share of inheritance to their brother's benefit. These two Muslim customs may bring some improvement in the condition of women, but they nevertheless remain rather minor facts when compared to the proportion of other livestock categories in a family herd and the numerous animal transfers which are typical of Tubu society. Two main organizational schemes give shape to the social condition of Tubu women and to their role in pastoral production. These are: the rule that prohibits marriage between close kin, and the system of livestock transfers—which is linked tightly to marriage. These institutions have in fact nothing to do with Islam, and are incompatible with the Arabo-Islamic custom of marrying the father's brother's daughter. If the latter type of marriage was ever to be adopted by the Tubu under Islamic influence, we would then expect that many significant changes would follow.

### NOTE

1. The Kanuri are the people of Bornu, south-west of Lake Chad (see map).

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